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Bharat's Heroes and Heroines Series No. 1.

LORD KRISHNA

By

M. L. PEACE
(America Trained Creative Writer)

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BUSTI GUZAN, JULLUNDUR.

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Invocation

to

Lord Krishna—The Liberator

L— Lord Krishna, come and come apace,
At this time of our piteous need,
Nerve us to quell the Chinese Reds,
Hovering with border-grabbing greed.

I— In annals of the human race,
In the liberators' list thy name
Is on the top, O saviour best,
O freedom's champion o' high fame.

B— Bit by the venomous Kalinag
That in the Jamuna did abide,
A lot of folk at Bindraban
Along with cattle daily died.

E— Even as a boy thyself didst plunge,
Mid sport into the river there,
Noosing the deadly scourge alive
Thou didst ride out in triumphant air.

R— Ruthless was Mathra's Raja Kams,
Him thou didst kill, not caring though,
He was related unto thee,
For he was public welfare's foe.

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A— Again, the ruler of Kanauj
Who had imprisoned maidens fair
Was made to liberate all of them,
With thee to fight he could not dare.

T— The Pandva brothers thou didst help
To gain their rightful regal throne,
Duryodhan and his wicked hosts
Into the fire of hell were thrown.

O— O Lord, Darupada thou didst save
From Kaurvas's shameless tyranny,
And thou didst also teach mankind
To set the soul from Maya free.

R— Revived the drooping Arjan fought,
As him, O lord, thou didst advise.
Come, come and galvanise us too
And show which way our victory lies.

Ist July, 1963. M. L. Peace

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THE PLAN

A day has three parts—the morning, the noon and the evening. Similarly man has three distinct stages of his life—childhood, youth and manhood. Each stage has its characteristic virtues. For example : in the first stage we have health, beauty, innocence, simplicity, cheerfulness, activity and love. In the second we have strength, endurance, love for action, purity, compassion and spirit for sacrifice. Similarly the last stage has steadiness, preseverance, wisdom, equilibrium and love for righteousness.

From the very start of his life, Krishna was possessed of all the attributes given above. Instead of declining, these virtues received a systematic, organic development as he advanced in years. On this score, we are justified to call him an ideal child, an ideal youth and an ideal man—a harmonious combination of all the three stages. Since God is the fountainhead of all virtues, we can hail our hero as the divine child, the divine youth and the divine man. This threefold divinity found its fulfilment in the achievements of his humanity so much so that his divinity became humanity itself.

His was a marvellous life of practical idealism. It is for this reason that, although over five thousand years have passed since he worked on this earth, Krishna is still loved by each Hindu boy, youth, and man of the present time. He is equally regarded by the members of the opposite sex. More-

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over, he is revered by all lovers of humanity for the high ideals of service, renunciation, and self-sacrifice which he presents to us, as exemplified in his life.

It is in the light of the above plan that we have tried to give in these pages a brief outline of this great man's achievements. No doubt we have ignored many incidents of his life, we have lightly touched upon others, and have given some in a little different way ; still we have done our best to show him as the divine child, the divine youth, and the divine man—a perfect ideal of divine humanity.

Since it has been our studied aim to be thoroughly rational in our treatment of the events of Krishna's life, we have deliberately avoided mentioning his miracles which are abundantly met with in other books. It is not because we do not believe in them, but because we have in view such of his doings in his day-to-day life as appear to us of far greater value than the display of his supernatural power. The silent way in which he helped his friend, Sudhama, and the message of Gita, which galvanised Arjun, the depressed and drooping Arjun, into a hero of the Mahabharata, appeal to us as greater miracles than his lifting Gowardhana upon his finger and drawing Kali, the serpent-dragon, out of the river by means of a nose-string.

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Krishna of Dwarka

(The Crown of Liberators)

Such incarnations I would take
In the World, O Bharta's son,
When Righteousness decays and Good
By Evil's overrun.
I walk embodied in each age,
Upholding Rigteousness,
To shield the virtuous and slay
The wick-ed who oppress. *Gita. iv. 7, 8.*

You must have heard the name of Ayudhiya. In ancient times it was ruled by the kings of the solar dynasty who kept peace and order in this kingdom. But outside its boundaries there was misrule and anarchy. Robbers and highwaymen wrought great havoc. The Rakshas harassed the holy people. The wicked oppressed the weak and the poor. The Kings were selfish and cruel. This went on for many centuries until a hero was born. It was Rama of Ayudhiya who cleared the Bharatavarsha of all such evils. He established what is known as Ram Raj, that is the rule of love, peace, and righteousness.

Rama gained a complete success in his work and the government which he set up was of an ideal type. Many rulers acting according to his principles gave prosperity and happiness to their subjects. But, with the passage of time, this country of ours again drifted into disorder. People became irreligious,

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selfish, and pleasure-loving. Love disappeared even among relatives.

There remained no Ram Raj in this land. The kings became tyrants. For example, one of them had enslaved four scores of vanquished rulers and later, after pushing their number to one hundred, wanted to offer them all as a sacrifice. How cruel ! Again, there was another who, having imprisoned his own father, seated himself on the throne in his stead. There was still another king, who captured over a hundred beautiful maidens and treated them immoraliy. Under such rulers what could be the state of the Bharatabhumi ? It can better be imagined than described. Evidently there was a crying need for another Rama. Such a Rama did come at last and his name was Krishna.

1. Krishna the Child

(1)

Krishna belonged to a royal family of Yadav rulers, but his parents were worse off than the poor of the realm. They had been put in Jail by Kanas, the king of Mathura, whose sister, Devaki, had been married to Vasudev. According to a prophecy, Kans was to meet his death at the hands of one of the sons of this sister. It was for this reason that he had Devaki and her husband put in jail He had been so heartless as to kill seven of their sons, turn by turn, as soon as they were born. The couple felt sorely distressed.

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Now the eighth child was to come forth. Kans made his watch stricter day by day. The couple prayed to God for the protection of the coming child, and He heard their prayer. As soon as the baby was born he was taken away by Vasudev across the Jamuna in the darkness of night.

It was a stormy night, yet a helpful and protective night. The doors of the jail had been left open by some mistake on the part of the guards. Perhaps it was through their haste to find a place of shelter from the fury of the storm which was characterised by incessant crashes of thunder.

The river was in flood, but the man was determined to take the baby across even at the cost of his own life. Even if the child were to be lost in the spate along with the father, such a death would be more welcome by far than the one which the baby was sure to meet at the hands of Kans. Vasudev was desperate. He plunged into the water and helped by the favourable drift of the current reached his destination. Before proceeding further he thanked God for His kindness.

(2)

Vasudev had also a second wife named Rohni. She had a son, Balram. Although Kans could have no evil design against any child born to this woman, yet it was feared that, being a tyrant, he might ill-treat him also. So before Balram was born, Rohni had been sent to Gokul, a village on the other side of the Jamuna. There in the house of Nanda, a rich cowherd and a fast friend of Vasudev, she was safely delivered

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of this baby whom they named Balram. The child and his mother were still living with Nanda and his wife, Yasoda.

(3)

"Who is knocking at the door ?" inquired a female voice. "Rohni, please open the door, it is I." replied the man. "What, the father of Balram ? wait I am coming." said the woman. The door was immediately opened and Vasudeva, bearing the newly-born baby in a basket, was admitted and the door was shut. There was talk in whispers for a minute or two between the husband and the wife. Rohni gently picked up the baby, kissed him, and took him inside requesting Vasudev to wait for a few minutes.

Hardly three minutes had passed when she returned bearing a small bundle. This she handed to her husband and, after whispering something into his ears, dismissed him and shut the door. Balram was sleeping. Nanda had gone out to call the midwife. Yasoda had given birth to a female child during his absence. There was no other person in the house except Rohni. Yasoda had become unconscious after her delivery. It was not a matter for much concern, since it happens so to many women at such a time.

It was just at this juncture that Vasudev had given the rap at the door. Rohni exchanged the babies without the knowledge of Yasuda. Before Nanda and the midwife entered, Vasudev was in a boat rowing back to Mathura carrying the female child in his lap.

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When Yasoda came back to her senses she was glad to see a male child lying by her side. It was her first child, born to her almost in her middle age. Nanda was full of joy. He went down on his knees to offer thanks to God.

(4)

As soon as Vasudev returned to Devaki with the small bundle, she inquired with anxiety what it was. Before he could make any reply the baby began to cry. Devaki's face turned white, and she cried out, "Oh, cruel misfortune, This baby too, will meet the same fate as our other children have done before." At this Vasudev, who was shutting the door, asked her to be patient and then, coming near he softly removed the cloth from the child's face and showed that this child was other than her own.

Devaki was surprised and felt bewildered. Her husband then told her the whole story. She was glad to learn that her own son was in safe hands. She coddled and kissed this baby and began to suckle it. They then sat down to talk. Vas said, "Dear Devaki, I tell you I saw strange things. You know that the jail doors were found unlocked." "Yes, go on, what then ?" replied the wife.

Vas continued, "The moment I left the door it ceased to rain. The Jamuna foamed in flood, but just as I plunged into the water the river became as quiet as a lamb. I felt as though some invisible force was carrying me along." "It is wonderful," put in Devaki.

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After scratching his forehead Vas went on, "I am going to tell you something still more surprising. As I returned in a boat it began to rain again. It was a very heavy rain and the lightning flashed and the thunder rolled fearfully. I rowed on smoothly, for not a single drop was falling into the river. Besides this, I saw a strange thing shadowing over me. As it was inky dark I could not identify what it was. Perhaps....."

"Oh, it is a miracle," interrupted Devaki. "Miracle or no miracle," put in the other, "one thing is certain : this child of ours enjoys the special protection of the Lord. He will grow and take revenge upon Kans for all the cruelties he has been doing us." "I think my brother will do no harm to this female child, since it is a male child of which he is afraid," observed the wife with some trepidation. "God knows it ; strange are the ways of tyrants." replied the husband.

In the meanwhile, day dawned and they heard a footfall near their door. Perhaps some one was coming, so they became silent.

(5)

Across the river, before it was light, the news was flashed throughout the whole of Gokul that a son had been born in the house of Nanda. At once women rushed to his door to offer congratulations. It was an event of great rejoicing in the whole village, since Nanda was a good man and a *patel* of the place. Soon, groups of barbers, washermen, watermen and other menials came. even as it is done in our day, and returned loaded with gifts of grain, jaggery, rice, and coins.

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The female musicians soon appeared at the door and began to sing. The children laughed and danced and Gokul saw a scene of unprecedented jubilation.

(6)

"Bring out the baby at once," demanded a stern voice, "Tear it from the arms of its mother." "Sire, it is a female child." replied one of the guards. "Never mind, bring it at once, whatever it may be. I must crush it. It is this eighth baby of Devaki that I fear the most." Having received this strict command from Kans, a servant went in and snatched the baby out of Devaki's arms. She pleaded for mercy. Her husband did the same, falling prostrate at the servant's feet. But the man could not act against his king's order.

Crying and weeping the couple followed this servant to the gate where Kans was standing. Devaki, his sister entreated him in most abject terms, but there was no mercy in the heart of Kans. He dashed the child upon a stone. Her head was shattered as if it had been crushed. She uttered a faint cry, gave a couple of gasps and all was still. Devaki fell down in a swoon. Vas looked on aghast,...a figure of speechless grief. With a triumphant shake of his head, the tyrant walked off as if nothing had happened.

(7)

Days went by. The baby at Nanda and Yasoda's house grew until he was some months old. He was given the name

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of Krishna. The ceremony was performed by a Brahman named Garg. Rejoicings were held. Charities were offered to the poor. The Brahmans were feasted. Young and old, all had such a joyous time, eating and singing.

(8)

Tyrants are generally very suspicious and credulous, Kans being no exception. Somebody reported to him that Devaki's offspring was not a female but a male and that somehow or other it had been smuggled away. Kans believed this. Immediately he ordered that all the male children under one year of age born in Mathra and the villages all around should be put to death.

This order was promptly obeyed and the executioners set out in all directions to do their acts of butchery. A horror spread through out the whole realm. Many people ran away to save their babies. Many hid their children. But then most of the fugitives were caught and the hidden babies having been searched out were cruelly slaughtered. They were killed in the very presence of their parents. A wail of lamentation rose from all sides. This reckless slaughter of innocent children went on for several days.

(9)

Do as Kans might, Krishna was quite safe. Who could harm him, since the Lord was his protector ? Soon he was a year and a half old and could easily toddle about.

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Nanda, though rich yet having remained childless for so long a time, had let his home run down until it came to look dreary and cheerless. Now all was changed. With the advent of Krishna and Balram his house had been turned into paradise. The merry shouts of the two children, their lisping talks, playful movements, and childish acts gave the household much delight.

Both the children were uncommonly healthy. They were active, blithe, and fearless. All day long they would sport about. Now they would imitate their mothers in the act of rolling round a piece of dough into a loaf. Now they would catch the strings of the churn handle and work them as women did every day to get butter from the curd. Now they would take small pots and approach Yasoda busy in milking a cow. Chuckling at the gurgling sound of the milk as it fell into the pot held between her knees they would open wide their mouths, giving her a nudge at the same time. In response she would turn to them and direct a jet of milk right into their mouths turn by turn. After brief intervals she repeated this process much to the delight of all concerned.

(10)

The people of Mathura had tired of their king's atrocities. They knew how he had clapped into jail his own father, Ugarsen, in order to become king himself. They knew how cruelly he had been treating his own sister and her husband. But this wholesale slaughter of innocent beings which he now perpetrated made him quite odious in the sight of all the public. They practically were seething with rebellion.

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As long as there was friction among the members of the Yadav clan, and as long as the royal scouts could create factions among the people and find men who would support Kans and justify all his dastardly acts, so long nothing could be done to oust him. Evidently a brave and righteous man of organising ability was needed, as a leader. But the leader was as yet a child.

(11)

Krishna and Balram were now seven and eight years old respectively. In point of health, intelligence, and activity they looked more than their age. The other children of Gokul regarded them as their leaders. Balram, though senior in age, looked upon Krishna as his guide, friend, and counseller, and obeyed him in every way. So Krishna was the leader of the children of Gokul. He was sbrewd, wise and ingenious.

The children enjoyed their amusements with a carefree abandon. They sang and danced about, clapping and shouting. Sometimes they played at "Hide and Seek" or started a game similar to "Blind man's Buff." Sometime they would take to making pies of mud or celebrating a mock wedding ceremony. Some times they would loosen the calves that they might get at their mothers' teats. Sometimes they would enter houses and finding none inside would eat butter, curd, and other edibles. If any of these things were placed beyond their reach, their leader would at once devise some plan to get at them. Oftener than not, their raids miscarried and they were caught and slapped, but they received this

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punishment calmly and left the place bearing no grudge against the punisher.

Krishna would frequently entertain the whole party with the dainties belonging to his own house. Of course, he did so only when Yasoda was away. Similarly, the other children would raid their own houses, when opportunity offered. Although the people regarded such activities as thievish, but the children did not interpret them that way. They rather thought like this : since it rains abundantly, the land produces grass plentifully, the cows feed heartily upon it and give streams of milk which are turned into delicacies. Now, in all these processes, the bounty of God plays the major part, so why are we not justified in claiming the share of all these blessings, without let or hindrance ?

(12)

Devaki and Vasudev were no longer treated as prisoners. The people of Mathura were sympathising with them. Kans, fearing lest his subjects should break into revolt, had set these kinsfolk free. Also, Devaki had ceased to bring forth any child, so her brother no longer had any reason for anxiety. Kans, however, kept a watch over them through his spies. Whenever they went out of Mathura the royal scouts followed them in one disguise or another so as to take note of their movements. In the event of even the least suspicion arising in the king's mind, the poor couple were at once put behind bars.

Often Devaki and Vasudev came to Gokul and were de-

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lighted to see Krishna and Balram so tenderly loved and cared for, as if Yasoda and Nanda were the real parents of the children. The relation between the visitors and the hosts were very cordial, and so the children respected the former and requited their love in a most filial way, but they did not have the same regard for them in their hearts as they did for Nanda and his wife.

The facts of Krishna's real parentage were yet a secret. It was good that it was so.

(13)

In time Krishna and Balram were grown up and able to assume the role of cowherds. It was the work which Nanda and his forebears had been doing. The boys loved this duty because it gave them opportunity to move about freely in the open air, enjoy the scenery of the countryside, and indulge in adventurous sports.

Every morning, the whole herd of cattle, belonging to Gokul, would march out in a procession, under the lead of a gigantic bull. This leader paced on, with dignified steps, swinging his magnificent horns gracefully, and letting the bell hanging from his neck tinkle, with a rhythmic peal. The little cowherds went, on either side, at some distance from one another. If any mischievious heifer broke the line or showed any undesirable movement, it was at once snubbed into order. Thus a strict discipline was maintained.

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(14)

These animals would go on until they reached the river bank. The Jamuna flowed in graceful ripples and eddies, night and day, laughing and singing with exquisite joy. It passed through meadows rich in green and luscious grass. The "Kadam" trees growing along the banks swung their leafy boughs, in response to every puff of breeze.

Beyond the pastures, lay a jungle full of flowering trees and shrubs that perfumed the air for miles around. The animals would disperse, on reaching the meadows and were left to themselves. Only were they checked from straying into the jungle for fear of reptiles and wild beasts.

The cows and bulls would either rest in the shade, chewing their cud or would leisurely pace about, while the younger creatures would run races or gambo in merry frolics.

The little cowherds would either climb the trees or wrestle or play some active game or plunge into the Jamuna and splash about in its grey-blue waters. When tired, they would come out and sit in a circle on the ground talking or hearing some tale.

(15)

When it was noon, the young cowherds grew hungry. Then they would open their tiffin bags and place their viands upon large plates of leaves. Chapaties, roast potatoes, sag, or other non-watery cates lay in a jumble before them. Nor was there any lack of pickles, chutnies, and home-made jellies.

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Without any distinction of high and low, all of them would sit at this common table and eat their food with great relish. Often they would indulge in jokes and laugh.

After this mid-day meal they would lie down and rest, but they were too full of fun and frolic to have a nap. They would sit up asking their leader to play his flute.

Krishna would comply at once, applying his "bansari" to his lips and breathing out such dulcet notes as would hold the hearers, spell-bound. The cows too were hypnotised by the sound, for they remained motionless, with ears pricked, eyes unwinking, and heads turned in the direction from which the music came The birds were enthralled and they ceased their own warblings. Even the Jamuna suppressed its watery noise so as to hear this strange minstrelsy.

(16)

In the afternoon the boys again would assume their active exercises and play on till evening. Before the sun went down, they would drive their cattle back to their village. The dust kicked up by the feet of hundreds of these animals rose up and hung like a grey pall in the atmosphere.

The cowherds followed behind their herd at some distance. Krishna again would start the music of his flute. The pleasant notes diffused far and wide by the vibrant air came into the ears of the villagers. The music was so captivating that young and old, men, women, and girls left off their work and stood waiting at their doors for the sight of the flute-player. Krishna was indeed a paragon of health and beauty and his "bansari" had real "Jadu" in it.

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(17)

On reaching the village the cows would disperse, running and lowing in response to the calls made by their young calves, left at home. Then followed night, and in winter the people of Gokul would gather round a huge fire made in Nanda's house, or, while it was summer, they assembled in an open space, illuminated by torches, when not flooded by moon light. There they enjoyed singing and dancing.

It was thus that these simple people led a life of active work and care-free pleasure. They ate the simplest, yet the most nutritious food, wore the home-spun and hand-woven khaddi, resided in homely huts, tilled their fields and pastured their cattle.

(18)

Nature is the best teacher : she educates us physically, mentally, and spiritually, in a quiet and simple way. Krishna got his schooling mainly from her. The open air work of the young cowherds, their running about, leaping, swimming, dancing and wrestling developed their muscles and made them smart and agile.

The river rolling along, full of liquid wealth and, offering it so freely and ungrudgingly to the service of God's creatures, gave them lessons in the selfless performance of duty.

The trees providing their genial shade, flowers, leaves, and fruits, free of any charge, inculcated in the minds of the young the lessons of renunciation and joyous ministration for others.

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The free air, the expansive pastures yielding an abundance of grass, the cows offering streams of milk, fostered in the young cowherds the spirit of generosity. The sun, moon, and the stars presented the best ideals of unflinching devotion to duty.

The birds pouring forth their sweet melodies taught that it was more blessed to give than to take.

Even the dangers which these young people had to encounter in the neighbouring jungle awakened in them a bold and fearless spirit. The sweet harmony which they found between the various objects of Nature created in them a sense of justice, love for peace, and the policy of living and letting others live.

Krishna and his comrades loved these surroundings, because they made them patriotic and united together in weal and woe.

(19)

Perhaps we have failed to mention before, that the village of Gokul had become very dirty, owing to the congestion of its population. Moreover, the river had shifted away from its vicinity. Nanda and the other "Gwalas" had, therefore, left this place and started a new colony near the Jamuna, known as Bindraban. Close to it was a beautiful hillock known as "Gowardhan Parbat," which afforded ample pasture for their cattle during all seasons. It was in such places that Krishna and his comrades now began to pass their time.

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(20)

We have stated at some length the moral influences which the open country exerted upon the young people of Brindaban. Added to them were also other instruments of education : the pure and simple life of the elderly folk, the chaste living of the females, the honest dealings of the males, their traditions, songs, folklore, stories of heroes, and such social features, afforded ample practical teaching to the young people.

There were schools also, known as Gurukulas, where boys were sent to stay with their teachers, as regular members of their families, rendering them personal service in lieu of tuition fees.

Krishna attended one of these schools where he studied the Vedas, the Upnishads and the Shastars. He also read Astronomy, Politics, History and allied subjects. One of the special features of such schools was the provision of military training which was particulariy given to the students belonging to the Kshatriya caste. Krishna, being a Kshatriya, imbibed this training with great eagerness and specialised as a warrior, expert in the use of various weapons, especially the club and the Chakkar.

In such schools, the boys of all classes, rich and poor, stayed together on terms of equality, and this feature was so thoroughly impressed upon Krishna as to form the outstanding trait of his character. After finishing his schooling he returned to Bindraban.

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2. Krishna the Youth

(1)

Not far from Bindraban there lived a monster in the Jamuna. It was a strange type of creature, neither fish nor beast. It resembled a serpent and gave a fatal bite like that of a king cobra. Many cattle had become its victims. Often in the afternoon, on summer days, it was seen dancing on the waves, hissing and drawing in and out its forked tongue with lightning movements. As it hissed, the water began to boil. So said the people who had seen this serpent. They named it Kali, because of its black colour. Its lidless eyes gave such a terrible stare that no man dared to face it.

Nobody could tell how and whence this Kali had come. But there was no denying the fact that it had become an object of terror for miles around. That part of the Jamuna where it lived was practically deserted. Beautiful lotus flowers blosso-m ed there in the water, but, owing to this terrible creature, they could be of no use to the people.

(2)

Krishna had returned from the Gurukul. He had become a Snat ık, answering to a graduate of our times, yet he did not despise the avocation of a cowherd. How could he ? He saw the dignity of it.

Taking his stick, with his flute tucked in his waist-band, Krishna would lead out the cows, as usual, in the company of

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other boys. With them he enjoyed, as before, all the games and pastimes. Sometimes, he would open a book to read silently in the shade of a tree, while the rest were busy in some sport. Sometimes, he would tell interesting things which his comrades heeded with rapt attention. Yet for all that there was no abatement of the fun and frolic that were considered as the enlivening factors of their daily life.

(3)

In early March, when the Holi festival was on, the boys were playing, one afternoon, with a ball. Krishna was the chief player. Lo, as the ball was hurled towards him he gave it such a hit with the "bat" in his hand that the ball rose high into the sky and, going some distance in the air, fell into the Jamuna. The water was tossed up with a splash and the ball was instantly lost in the eddies. It belonged to a small boy who began to weep, because it was his favourite plaything.

Krishna promised him another ball far better than the one lost, but its owner would not listen to him. Who should then plunge into the water and dive deep into its depth to search out the treasured ball ? Nobody dared do so. The lair of Kali, the serpent, was not far off Did not the boys know of it already ? They knew it, but in a spirit of dare-devilry they had ventured so far in playing on the riverside. Of course, they understood that the monster, being a water creature, could not come over to the dry land to do them harm.

But now there was quite a different situation. The owner of the ball cried and cried, insisting that his ball must, somehow, be recovered. While the other boys were busy reasoning

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with him, Krishna put off his headgear and, with the rest of his garments still on, he plunged into the river.

The water parted with an angry splash. All eyes were turned to it. But ere the boys could say anything to check their friend from the rash step he had taken, Krishna was well out in the stream. He was a good swimmer. But, swimmer or no swimmer, he was sure to be caught and killed by Kali. Consequently the boys felt very much depressed. Balram's face turned pale. Some of them slipped away to tell Nanda and his relatives.

(4)

Half an hour was gone, still no trace of Krishna was visible. His father and mother and almost all the villagers of Bindraban were seen trooping towards the place from where he had made his fatal plunge. There was an uproar of lamentation.

Before these people reached the spot the boys heard something rustling among the lotus plants. All eyes were attracted hopefully in this direction. A minute later, the sound of a flute was heard. Unmistakably it was Krishna's flute, played after the fashion of a snake-charmer piping his gourd. For the boys on the bank, hope now became expectancy. Presently they saw a sight which gave them the creeps. It was Krishna emerging from the clump of lotus and reed plants, and drawing the monster, Kali, along by means of his scarf, one end of which he had firmly fixed in the fungs of the serpent in such a way that it could not open its mouth.

Moreover, Kali was so hypnotised by the sound of the

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music that it willingly obeyed its captor, and anticipating the direction in which the flute player wanted to go, it at once put itself forward and glided on the water. The scene appeared like a horse or a camel ambling along with its rider on its back, holding the reins or the nose-string in his hands.

All the while Krishna kept on piping his flute.

(5)

The sight afforded by the serpent and the youth was astounding and threatened to become tragic for the beholders. Krishna, however, was quite calm and collected, as though he were the master of the situation. As the monster drew nearer, the people ran away in panic.

Some climbed trees ; some went up a neighbouring knoll ; the stronger lifted up the weak upon their backs and rushed them away to places of safety that were yet within sight of the scene.

By and by the captor and the victim reached the river's edge. With a tremendous jerk Krishna dragged the monster out of the water and then pulled it still further up on the dry land. All at once he stopped his music. The serpent began to feel uneasy. Krishna let go the scarf. The monster reared up its hood and looked about, a fearful, yet at the same time, a magnificent creature, but being out of its element it began to hiss and writhe and gasp and then soon collapsed. There it lay quite dead, a mere heap of black coils.

Still nobody would dare to come near. Krishna turned the reptile upside down to show that its limp body was, indeed,

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quite lifeless. In the meanwhile his kinsfolk and other villagers arrived. On seeing Krishna alive and unhurt their sorrow was changed to joy. Moreover, Kali was dead ; the scourge was gone. Was Krishna a man or a god ? The people among whom he lived, be it noted, thenceforth, began to regard him as a divine being.

(6)

"We have been swimming in the Jamuna for a long time. Let us go out of the water," proposed Lalta. A moment later she cried out,"Where are our garments ? Why, we placed them under that tree. Can anybody have stolen them ?" Champa, Gomti, Gargi, Urmla, and others at once looked up in the direction of the tree. Filled with anxiety they turned their restless glances to all sides, but no trace of their clothes could be found.

All the girls were in a predicament. Without their garments how could they return home ? Whom should they call for help ? Where could they call ? When they saw no way out of their plight, they began to blame themselves for venturing on this side of the river, instead of going to the bathing ghat, reserved for females and where all arrangements for privacy had been made. They repented well, pulling at the lobes of their ears, but this did not help them out of their embarrassing situation.

When these girls had become quite contrite and, in their helpless state, were about to burst into tears, a voice came through the air, saying, "Remain in the water. You are being

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punished." They all gave a start to hear this voice and at once dipped down neck-deep in the water. For a while thus they stood, tongue-tied. Then one of them made bold to say, "Please return our clothing, we shall not come here again." Then others, with eyes lowered, put forth their pleas in terms of humble entreaties.

"All right, since you repent I shall take pity on you. Remain in the water while I come down with your load of garments." With these words a youth, wearing a mask on his face, climbed down the tree in which he had hidden and put down the bundle of their clothes. "Now come out and put on your garments," said he. The girls made a scramble, the youth keeping on his mask all the while. Frantically they songht to cover themselves ; no matter if one donned the clothing of the other, or had her jacket inside out, so long as each got clothed.

When all the girls had finished and stood with due modesty, the water still dripping from their unwiped bodies, the youth removed the mask. Lo, it was Krishna who had warned them several times before against bathing in that manner. At once they turned away their faces in shame. Without a word the flute-player went his way, leaving the girls wiser than before.

(7)

"Every year in this rainy month," thought Krishna, one day, "the people of Brindaban hold a feast in honour of Indra. To my mind this worship seems to be quite a dull and out-

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worn function. Something living and of local interest should be subsituted."

In two days the feast was to come off. The Kali-killer proposed that instead of Indra, with whom they had never met, they should offer their homage to Gowardhan, the small mountain standing in their midst. He argued that in return for the rich pasture which it afforded they owed a debt of gratitude to that Hill, and that it must be paid. All the "Gawalas" welcomed this proposal.

On the fixed day, a procession of bovine creatures, well decked with green, yellow, and scarlet cloths, with wreaths of flowers and other ornaments, such as copra, sultanas. and dried dates, hanging from their horns, was started towards the mountain. Pack animals and carts loaded with provisions followed. Then came the people singing and playing various musical instruments. All went up the Hill. It was a sunny day.

There they cooked the viands and made a grand feast in honour of Gowardhan. The cows and bulls fed on the succulent grass. This feast was to last for about a week. The first two days passed off very smoothly, but, on the third, the sky was overcast with clouds and rain began to fall. It was a heavy rain and the water kept pouring down, the whole day. Some timid folk began to think that it was a revenge that Indra was taking upon them for dishonouring him.

Krishna laughed all such remarks to scorn. He had already made provisions against this bad weather. There were two

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long and wide caves near the top of the mountain. In one of them fodder had been collected. All the cattle were accommodated there. In the second, which had been swept scrupulously clean, arrangements for light and cooking had already been made, and it was now occupied by the people. Outside, the thunder rolled and the lightning flashed and the rain kept pelting down, but inside, the "Gawalas" were quite snug and comfortable. Here they sang and made merry as they had done on the first two days.

In a few days the flood in the Jamuna subsided and the people, still rejoicing, climbed down the slopes and wended their way back to the village. Soon they repaired the damages that had been done to their tenements by the rain and resumed their round of work. They were glad for the victory they had won over Indra. Since then, Gowardhan began to be worshipped as the prominent symbol of their Homeland.

(8)

After the killing of Kali and the Gowardhan incidents, the people of Brindaban began to regard Krishna much the same way as the Israelites did their Liberator, Moses.

Krishna's fame as a brave young man, endowed with all the virtues of a leader, spread far and wide. Men from outside often came to see him and returned highly impressed with his cultured talk, hospitable manners, love for justice, and ambition for selfless service of humanity.

Such visitors also praised his high intelligence, his calm and balanced disposition. They equally admired his excellent

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physique, tall stature, and soldierly bearing. To them he appeared to possess such a unique combination of so many virtues that they often wondered in their minds, "Is he man or god ?"

By and by Kans, too, came to hear of Krishna's fame. The more he heard of this young hero the more he was filled with fear.

"What is he ?" he often asked himself. "It may be that he is the eighth child of Devaki. But no, it was a girl whom I had done to death. Perhaps some deceit has been perpetrated on me. But how could that be, since my men searched out all the younglings about the age of that child and killed them all ? Anyway I am perplexed. A son of a cowherd cannot perform such feats of valour." In this state of bewilderment Kans began to pass his time restlessly.

(9)

Rohni : Dear Krishna, why do you feel so sad today ? What's the matter ?

Krishna : Dear mother, there is nothing the matter Last night I had a strange dream. I was just thinking of it.

Rohni : What's that ? Do tell it to me at once.

Krishna : (Looking around to make sure that no third person was nearby to listen) During my sleep I found myself visiting a jail. There, in one of the cells, I noticed a man and a woman sitting on a mat.

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She had a baby in her lap. The baby was asleep. The man and the wife were talking of their miserable life. It was such a tale of grief that tears eame In my eyes.

Rohni : Don't hesitate, come on with your dream.

Krishna : (With a gulp in his throat) Their story was so pathetic that every time I turn to it, I feel choked with emotion.

Rohni : Poor miserable people!

Krishna : Then ail at ouce a terrible-looking gaint came there and snaching away the baby began to devour it.

Rohni : (Shuddering) How cruel. What could be the state of the parents who saw this butchery ?

Krishna : The mother gave a wild shriek and fell down senseless.

Rohni : what a savage tyranny.

Krishna : The woman again bore a baby.

Rohni : That was good.

Krishna : (With a strange laugh) This baby too .....

Rohni : How brutal.

Krishna : Seven of her offspring were treated thus, one after the other, as they came along.

Rohni : (Falling back trembling) what a horrible dream !

Krishna : But, as soon as the eighth son was born he was taken away by the father and handed to some other woman.

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Rohni : That was good.

Krishna : The woman who received the baby was exactly like you in features.

Rohni : It is a very strange vision.

Krishna : It was still stranger. Look here, the father and the mother of the eighth baby resembled those guests of ours that often hail from Mathura. Do you not call them Vasudev and Yasoda, no, I mean Devaki ? Now will you please unravel this mystery ?

Upon hearing all this, Rohni kept silent, lost in wonder. Krishna insisted that she throw some light upon his dream. several times words came to the lips of Rohni, but remained unuttered. At last she found her tongue and said, "Dear son, what you have seen in the vision is quite true. I wonder how this truth has dawned upon you ? Vasudev is your father. Devaki is no other than your mother. The gaint is your uncle Kans, who has done to death seven of your brothers. As soon as you were born you were brought here. and I put you by the side of Yasoda who had given birth to a girl.

As the mother fainted soon after her delivery I was able to exchange the babies. That is, I put you there and gave the girl to your father. This secret was never told to Yasoda and Nanda who have been bringing you up as their own child. "what about the girl ?" demanded Krishna. "Your uncle put her to death ar he had done your brothers," replied Rohni. Krishna gave a shudder.

After a little pause Rohni continued, "Somehow or other

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this tyrant of Mathura came to know the trick that had been played. Taking no chances he at once sent his men round to kill all the babies about your age, not sparing even those younger or older than you. By the special grace of God you did not fall into the hands of those executioners. So this is the real story. Please let it not out of your lips."

Krishna who was naturally very cool-tempered felt all restraints loosening from his disposition. His eyes turned red. He seemed to be boiling within himself with rage. "All right, I must reckon with this tyrant someday." Having said these words he regained his self-composure. At this point Yasoda entered the room and the talk ceased.

"Yes, this is the truth : Krishna is Devaki's son, "said Kans to himself. "Never mind, if he has escaped death once, I must devise some plan to do away with him. Now, he is a mere "Gawala", while I am the monarch of Mathura. But wait a bit ; they say he is very fearless, brave and resourceful. a perfect wrestler, and a unique fighter. He must be too formidable to tackle easily. The executioners must have been bribed to let him go scot free, when he was a baby.

"Anyhow, if force won't do in this case, I must resort to some trick. Let me see, I am his uncle. There is no doubt of that. I can simulate a tender attitude, and by a show of love win Devaki's heart, so as to get her to invite Krishna to Mathura. Then it will be an easy job for me to have him poisoned."

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(12)

Krishna's most confidential friend was his brother, Balram. To him, one day, the Flute-player opened his mind. Both of them were fired with vengeance and began to think out ways to deal with the tyrant. Balram suggested that they organise a sort of militia by recruiting it from the cowherds and that, finding opportunity, they should burst suddenly upon their enemy. Krishna turned down this proposal, since it meant fighting and the blood-shed of innocent people. He argued that only Kans was their enemy and that it was he alone who should be killed, somehow or other.

They could not formulate any definite plan that day. However, their hatred towards this tyrant waxed greater day by day, as they came to learn more and more about his cruel acts against his own father and against the public in general.

(13)

It was the middle of winter. One morning the mist was rolling all around in enormous billows. The trees, the huts, and even the hills were almost invisible. The sun was up, no doubt, but before the clouds and mist it seemed helpless. The day was dull and sombre.

Inspite of the cold which ordinarily checked the people from stirring out and even from attending to their various jobs indoors, there was quite a number of folk, male and female, clustering round a chariot waiting in front of Nanda's house. Some held the horses, some had their hands laid upon the

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harness, some stood baulking the way, some clung to the wheeis, and some were attempting to climb the vehicle.

Why ? Krishna and Balram were going to Mathura, where the king had invited them. Was Krishna the son of Yasoda and Nanda or was he a prince ? Anyhow they were unwilling to let him and his brother go. The brothers promised to return very soon, but the people of Bindraban shook their heads. Some of them were in tears and suspected some foul play afoot under the guise of such an invitation. Akrur, the messenger assured them that no wrong would be done to the brothers. At last after many entreaties he succeeded in getting his way cleared enough to drive the chariot through. Even then many followed on foot to reach Mathura, for they could not brook separation from their beloved friends.

(14)

Yasoda felt sorely depressed, bitter tears were coursing down her cheeks. Nanda was dumb with grief. Their house looked dull and dreary like a graveyard. Even the cows felt distracted. "I know, he did not look like a Gwala's son," "sighed Yasoda. "I think so, too," groaned the husband, and added, "Could such beauty, valour, and intelligence ever be the portion of a cowherd's son ? We have been cheated. Our child was a girl and she was exchanged with this boy whom we named Krishna. Had that girl remained with us we would have been much better off....."

Rohni consoled the couple saying, Look here, Krishna is still your son. No doubt, Devaki gave him birth, but you

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loved and brought him up. She is mother only in name. Yasoda, rest assured, you are his real mother. He confessed this to me. He can never forget your kindness. He told me that if ever the history of his life came to be recorded, Yasoda and not Devaki would figure as his mother, and similarly Nanda and not Vasudev, as his real father.

Balram's mother tried her best to satisfy both the husband and the wife, but they remained disconsolate.

(15)

Krishna and Balram, followed by a host of young cowherds, walked through the streets of Mathura. Some citizens laughed to see their odd dresses, while others admired their excellent physique and stalwart statures.

The king treated his guests with an elaborate show of civility and looked to their comfort in a hospitable manner. The following morning Krishna and Balram were requested to entertain their royal host by an exhibition of their skill in wrestling. It was an exercise in which both brothers were considered very efficient.

(16)

In the forenoon, the wrestling match was held. In a tastefully decorated pandal and, under a canopy of gold and silver cloth, sat the king on a chair made of sandal and ivory carved in the shape of two tigers with their fore-paws joined together to uphold the seat. Around him were present his courtiers and other officers of the state, dressed in festive robe . On wooden planks set in the form of a gallery, sat the elite of the town

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and other rich people of the kingdom. while carpets spread on the ground offered seats for the general public.

The band struck up as the signal for the match to begin. Immediately from the row of the courtiers emerged Krishna and Balram. From the opposite sidc appeared the state wrestlers, Chanaur and Mushtik. The spectators eyed now the first pair and now the second. All the four began to take off their clothing. The champion of Brindaban had scarlet waist-cloth and those of Mathura, green. Krishna was to wrestle with Chanaur and Balram with Mushtiki. Each of the four advanced into the middle of the arena, a square place where the earth had been freshly broken and softened by spading. The rivals shook hands and then retreated, facing each other.

(17)

After a minute's pause the royal wrestlers stepped forward with outstretched arms towards their adversaries. They came swaggering, jumping and hopping, and parading their physical strength. Both brother stood gazing at them for a while and then taking careful and measured steps they came to grips with them. The youths were handsome, supple, and smart, and their bodies looked well-formed; but they seemed no fit match against their rivals, who appeared as veritable giants in strength. The people began to think that it was cruel to put such young fellows against the seasoned wrestlers of the state. They feared lest the former should receive injury at the hands of the latter.

The contest went on for some time. Again and again, the athletes of the green shade downed those of the scarlet, but

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every time by a subtle movement the latter at once saved themselves and stood up again. The spectators watched the play amid a pin-drop silence, and at the slght of a clever feat displayed by either party burst into quick applause, with clappings of hands.

(18)

The wearers of the green exerted themselves to their utmost, but they could not achieve anything. They saw that their fame was at stake, even if the bouts ended with neither side winning. They, therefore, became desperate and exercised their stodgy frames to such a degree that they began to pant. Now was the chance for the wearers of the scarlet, who hitherto had been acting wholly on the defensive, using only so much strength as was needed. Again the rivals grappled and again they separated. In spite of the cold the royal wrestlers were sweating and breathing hard, while their adversaries were comparatively fresh and collected.

Now it ren ained a moment's work. By the application of his favourite dodge known as "Kalajang" Krishna at once brought down his adversary with his back and shoulders kissing the dust. A shout of loud acclamation rose from the audience, especially from the gallery where the "gawalas" were sitting. Balram could not lag behind In the next moment hc, too, had his rival down by applying a feat called "Dhak". Again there was a vociferous shout of applause.

The victory had been won, but the victors followed up their advantage, and laying their fingers on tthe throats of their prostrate adversaries strangled them to death.

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(19)

The king's plot had failed and the tables had been turned against him in such a way as to put him to open shame. He was excited with rage and boomed out, "Arrest these two brothers on a charge of murder. Although they are my kinsfolk, still justice must be done against them ; the murder must be avenged."

Krishna had come to know of the plot that had been intended to kill him as well as his brother, Balram. The wrestlers had been secretly instructed to do the youths to death. They would have done so had they got the chance.

On seeing Kans fulminating with rage Krishna leapt upon him like a tiger, and hurled him at once to the ground. Kans was hurt in the brain. Balram immediately pounced upon his body and strangled him to death before anybody could move to help the king A hush fell upon the spectators. The king of Mathura was murdered in broad day light. Horror seized every heart. Krishna, who erstwhile looked the grim figure of Yama, assumed sober features and said, "Listen to me, ye people of Mathura. This king was my uncle and his death is more grievious to me than to any body else. But you know he was a tyrant. It was better for him to die than to live any longer to multiply his deeds of cruelty. I need not mention the treatment he has accorded to his father. I need not recount how many brothers of mine he has put to death. Among you there may be many who have sufferred unjustly at his hands, one way or the other. So this is the end which he fitly deserved."

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(20)

As soon as Krishna finished, there arose a shout. "Thanks to Krishna, the champion of Freedom. Tyranny is dead. Long live the brave brothers." But the King's brother was of a different mind. Along with some of his friends he thought of revenge. Then and there he attacked Krishna and Balram. There was a fight in which the avengers were killed. However, this struggle was quickly over and peace was soon restored. The people offered the crown to Krishna, but he refused to become the king, saying ,"I had no hunger for kingship. I killed Kans, because he was a cruel monarch."

(21)

Ugarsen, the father of the deceased Kans was taken out of the jail and seated upon the throne of Mathura, with due rites But the wife of Kans soon went to her father, named Jarasandha the emperor of Maghada, and amid tears reported about her widowhood. Jara was full of rage and immediately ordered his troops to march. Mathra was invaded, but the people fought agsinst the invader with great valour and repulsed him. Again and again he came to conquer the city but with no better results. Krishna and Balram defended it. The Yadavs who had been split into factions were all united unner the influence of Devki's son.

Krishna saw that he alone was the main cause of Jara's frequent invasions of Mathura, resulting in wanton bloodshed of innocent people. He, therefore left that place and taking his father and mother repaired to a place far off near the seashore and there founded a settlement which he named Dwarka.

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Dwarka was an island close to the peninsula of Kathiawar. It was a beautiful place with a small mountian situated in the middle of it. The top and the slopes were wooded with trees of various sorts. During monsoon, the rain was heavy and rills and rivulets glided down the hillsides and meandered through the plains.

There were extensive fields of wonderful fertility. grassy meadows, gardens, and lawns all around. Krishnu selected this spot and started putting up buildings there. A palace, a fort, and a rampart were soon built. Bazara, roads, marts, and houses were quickly made. In the course of a few years the lonely solitudes of Nature were turned into a populated town, alive with the hustle bustle of urban activities.

Because of its equable climate caused by the nearness of the sea and by other factors, such as the natural scenery, fertile soil, streams, hills, mercantile activities, and sanitary locality, Dwarka came to be reckoned as an earthly paradise. People from various parts of India flocked to it. They were attracted also by the fact that this new settlement was a land of peace, freedom, and comfort, in contrast with other cities where kings were cruel and strifes were common.

Almost all the members of the Yadav community, who had been much troubled by Kans and his father-in-law, Jarasandha, shifted to this island. Krishna made his father, Vasudev, the king of Dwarka, while he himself managed all the state affairs.

Dwarka, equipped with all the amenities of life, social, economic, educational, religious and spiritual, was an ideal

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colony, just as Krishna, its founder was an ideal man. It is, therefore, that we have associated the names of the founder and the colony to make the title of this book, that is, "Krishna of Dwarka."

(23)

Krishna loved Dwarka as a mother loves her first-born child. Yet it does not mean that he always stuck to this place. When occasion arose he would go out to other localities were he was needed to suppress feuds, stamp out tyranny, quell unrighteousness, and to promote many other humaintarian works. Always he returned to Dwarka, when there where respites from these self-imposed duties abroad. A year, a month, nay even a week passed in the tranquil atmosphere of Dwarka, gave him much relief and comfort. Thus refreshed he would again go out to resume his struggle against the forces of evil, so rampant in the vast country of India at that time, and would fight on for years. without exhaustion.

(24)

There was a novel feature in the Gandharva system of marriage; a maiden, especially of a ruling family, would write secretly to the youth whom she wanted to marry in preference to the match proposed by her relatives. She would request him to come and carry her away in the teeth of her kinsfolks' opposition. Sometimes she would inform him of the time and the place where she should be waiting for him and thus facilitate her being carried away.

Generally speaking, it was a very hazardous task ; swords

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were drawn sabres rattled and streams of blood flowed out. Nevertheless, such an invitation, coming from such a quarter, no Kshatriya, worth his salt, would turn down, no matter what the cost.

(25)

Now there was a maiden, named Rukmini. She was the daughter of Bhismak, the king of Kundanpura, a state to the south of the Vindhiyachal. She hae been betrothed to Shishupal, the General Jarasandha's army, but she was determined that she would not marry this man. She had set her heart upon Krishna of Dwarka.

Finding herself in this difficult situation, Rukmini wrote to the Kali-killer, expressing her deep love for him and pleading him for deliverance from her kinsfolk, who proposed to foist upon her the match of their choice Ardently did she appeal to him to come at once and take her away before she was forcibly wedded to Shishupal.

Krishna could not reject such an appeal for help. He started without delay and reached Kundanpura, just in the nick of time. The marriage party had arrived and the wedding was to be celebrated that very night. Rukmini had come out to offer the bridal worship at a shrine outside the city. Krishna, driving in a chariot, suddenly appeared on the scene. He at once snatched Rukmini up out of the group of her female friends, as she and they stood outside the city before the gate of the shrine, to which she had come to offer the customary bridal "puja".

Quickly the chariot, now bearing Rukmini, turned and,

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drawn by Krishna's swift-footed horses, rolled away and was lost in the distance. They were hotly pursued. Fights took place. But Rukmini was never recovered. Upon reaching Dwarka, she was married to Krishna with due ceremony and ever after she proved herself a good wife.

3. Krishna the Man

(1)

"My friends, why are you making a row ?" said a man of tall stature, princely mien, and saintly deportment. "He has fullfiled the conditions of Swayamvara, so Dropadi, the bride is his. Where is the occasion for this wrangle ? Let him be poor or rich, Brahman or Kshatriya, it matters little. Is he not a peerless archer, as he has shown himself to be by hitting the eye of the metallic fish revolving on the top of the pole, though seeing only its reflection in the water which filled a trough below ? You should praise his skill rather than band yourselves together to fight him." These words uttered by that Yogi, who was no other than Krishna, had their effect, and the discomfitted suitors dispersed, slinking away one by one.

Krishna surveyed the winner of Dropdi from head to foot. and after a couple of minutes exclaimed, "What, are you not Arjun ?" The man who looked like a Brahaman fell at his feet, saying, "Yes, I am, dear Kinsman. Krishna lifted him up and embraced him, tears gushing into the eyes of both. He met then the other Pandava brothers and hugged them one after the other.

Never before had Krishna felt so glad as he did at this

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time, He thought that his cousins, the Pandava brothers, had perished in the flames of the fire which had been set to the shellac house where they were living with their mother, Kunti. This was a mischief wrought by Duryodhan, who was determined to wipe them out of existence, so as to become the sole master of Hastnapnr, which by right belonged to the Pandavas. Having been forewarned of this, they had escaped from the house before the mischief fell.

The bride's father also was glad to know that Daropadi's new relations were not poor Brahamana, but princes of royal blood and true Kshatriyas.

(2)

"Dear elder brother, should we not celebrate the Rajsuya yagna ?" inquired Bhim. Yudhishtir replied, "Why not ? From wandering exiles we have turned rulers. We have founded this beautiful kingdom of Indıaprast where formerly was a desert of burning sand." "It was all due to the help of our cousin, Krishna, who told us so many schemes for improving this land just as he had done his own Dwarka," put in Bhim.

"Yes, I recall now" rejoined Yudhishtra, "I had asked Krishna about this yagna, but he advised me to wait till Jarasandha was removed." Bhim inquired with anxiety, "Why, how does this man stand an obstacle in the way ?" "Don't you think that Jara considers himself the emperor of India ? Would he tolerate the growth of our power of which the yagna is a manifestation ?" replied the elder brother. So they had to wait a little longer.

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(3)

"Sire, two Snataks are waiting outside. They are anxious to see your Majesty, "reported the door keeper. "Let them in at once," ordered Jarasandha, the king of Rajgiri. As soon as the strangers were admitted, the monarch stood up to receive them and with due courtesy offered them seats.

During talk the visitors revealed their identities as Krishna and Arjun. They said, "we have come to have a duel with you," Now this was a challenge which Jara, being a true Kashatriya,could not but accept. The duel did take place and Jara was killed.

Another instrument of Tyranny was removed, and that too in so simple a way. Jara's son was seated on the throne of Magadha. The captive rajas, whom the deceased had wanted to offer as sacrifice, as soon as their nnmber went up to a hundred, were set free at once. They returned to their respective kingdoms, blessing the name of Krishna and calling him as the Iberator of humanity. The Rajsua was performed. It was finished smoothly but for one untoward incident which we must recount. It was the death of Shishupal.

This prince was a cousin of Krishna just as the Pandava brothers were. Krishna held them very dear, but there was no love lost between him and Shishu. There was more than one cause for this hostility. Krishna had taken away Rukmani, the fiancee of Shishu. This Shishu was a partisan of Jarasasanda whom Krishna regarded as his enemy. Shishu had invaded Dwarka during Krishna's absence and set fire to the town.

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Although Shishu was a mean, vindicative, and dastardly man, yet Krishna did not mind it. Regarding him as his cousin he often connived at his mischievious acts. Now at the yagna both of them were present. Somebody proposed the name of Krishna for worship as the "Best man" during the holy performance. Shishu opposed it by criticising the Lord of Dwarka, in an undignified way.

Krishna kept silent at first, but when Shishu went on using more and more of insulting words, the former could not tolerate them any longer and so he challenged Shishu to a duel. The fight took place then and there and Shishu's head was cut off.

(5)

A weary Brahman, poor, footsore.
No shoes, no cap, stands at the door.
The gate-man will not let him in;
So ragged a man he ne'er had seen.

The Brahman pleads with folded hands,
But quite unmoved the other stands.
Lord Krishna hears the noise without,
Comes forth to know what it's about.

The stranger he doth recognise,
"Sudhama, you? " anon he cries,
"Welcome, my friend, " he runs apace
And locks him fast in his embrace.

Him Krishna gives an honoured seat
And gently cleans his dusty feet.
In joy they talk of former days,
While Rhukmini looks with amaze.

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The guest has brought no offering meet,
Except some rice tied in his sheet.
This humble gift he tries to hide.
But by his host it is espied ?

He snatches it with ardent pleasure,
As though it were a heavenly treasure.
He eats the rice—unparch-ed rice
And smacks his lips, "How sweet, how nice. "

So Krishna feasts his guests for days,
Between the friends equality plays.
At last Sudhama, "Now I'd go, "
To which the host says firmly, "No. "

The other homeward would repair
While Krishna still would keep him there.
Yet press-ed hard he lets him go,
No gift doeth he on him bestow.

Sudhama goes, disturbed in mind,
"How's that ? No succour could I find
From such a generous friend as he,
Who holds so rich a realm in fee.

Did he not know that I am poor,
Deserving of his help most sure ?
I wish I could have made appeal,
But then a gag my mouth did feel.

Now empty-handed back I go
Just as I came; great is my woe.
In bitter words my wife will scold
To see me coming with no gold.

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My mission thus hath come to naught,
Lo, wretched still abides my lot."
Heart-sick and sad Sudhama goes,
And at each step his distress grows.

At last with pale and cheerless face
Sudhama gets his native place
He fails to find his cottage there
And is o'erwhelmed with sore despair.

Now as perplexed and filled with doubt,
Before a mansion he looks 'bout,
His wife, dressed as a lady fair,
Comes forth to greet him standing there.

Quite dazed Sudhama still doth stand
Like one that's lost in fairyland.
And as he gazes with surprise
On stately things before his eyes,

She tells how Krishna, wise and good,
Had done for them all that he could
To lift them from their wretched state—
A silent act of Friendship great.

(6)

Krishna passed his time at Dwarka, discharging diligently the duties of a householder. He loved his wife and children, served his aged parents and other kinsfolk and gave attention to the improvement of his little kingdom. All of a sudden he received the report of his cousins, the pandavas, being sent to exile for the second time. Yudhishtir, the eldest brother had been entrapped into gambling with the Kauravas, with the

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result that he lost his kingdom and had to wander in jungles for fourteen years along with Dropadi and his four brothers.

On hearing such a disconcerting news Krishna at once started from Dwarka, and after a good deal of roaming about in wilds and forests in quest of the Pandavas, he succeeded at last in finding them in the Kamyakvan.

(7) (*i*)

Krishna : (Aside) Although I have wandered from grove to grove yet I have not been able to find any trace of the exiled Pandavas, living here. They have courted another misfortune. What a long period of banishment is theirs ! Anyhow, I must seek them and offer them consolation. Oh, there, under a tree, a man is sitting. Let me go up to him. (Goes) I must stand behind this tree and hear what he is talking about to himself.

Yudhishtir : (Aside) Indeed, it is I that am to blame. It was out of sheer folly that I consented to gamble. I must, therefore, suffer the consequence. Had the whole trouble fallen on me I would never have murmured. Alas, my brothers and Dropadi have been compelled to suffer for no fault of theirs. It is the thought of their trouble which has been tormenting me day and night.

Krishna : (Aside) Oh, it is Yudhishtir. How deeply anguished he feels ! What a change ! Not long ago I left him as a magnificent monarch receiving the homage of other kings, but now, I find him sitting on the bare earth, habited like a beggar,

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whom even a pariah would not salute.

Yudhishtir: (Aside) What penance should I perform ? No longer can I tolerate the sight of Dropadi's distress. O mother Earth, burst apace and hide me.

(*ii*)

Krishna: (Revealing himself) Dear kinsman, do not be so sorry. You need not blame yourself. It is Destiny that makes us play Her game.

Yudhishtir: (With a start) Noble Krishna, how is it that you have come here ?

Krishna: It is your distress that has brought me here. Don't let yourself be so depressed ; the days of evil fortune will soon be over. Rest assured, the wicked must be confounded some day. Rajan, your justice and righteousness must triumph in the loug run.

Yudhishtir: Sit down, Bhagwan, What service can we poor creatures render you ? (Calls) Dropadi, come out, here is our friend, Lord Krishna of Dwarka. (She comes out of the hut and falls at the guest's feet drenching them with her tears.)

Krishna: (Lifting her up) Chaste lady, have patience. You will soon get relief.

Dropadi: Oh, our wicked foes have reduced us to this wretched condition (Bursts into sobs)

Krishna: I know it ; had I been at Hastinapur, all this

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misfortune could have been averted. However, I may assure you that those people are paving the way to their own ruin. (Comes in Bhim bearing a load of firewood) It really pains me to see our beloved Gadadhari reduced so low. (Bhim bows and Krishna embraces him)

Dropadi : I don't mind this misfortune, but what rankles in my bosom, day and night, is the memory of the insult which they so openly offered to me.

Krishna : I have heard all this. Even the worst sinners could not have done such a shameless act. The very heaven and earth are crying for justice on your behalf. Rest assured, Dropadi, the day of retribution is not far off.

Bhim : I have taken an oath to kill Dushasan and dress the hair of Dropadi with his blood, the very hair by which this miscreant, dragging her out of the harem, brought her into Durbar, imperfectly clad as she was.

Dropadi : Till then I shall keep my hair dishevelled.

Bhim : I have also vowed to break Duryodhan's thigh which he shamelessly laid bare in the Durbar, inviting Dropadi to come and sit there. We shall avenge all these wrongs upon Duryodhan and his party. (All move off into the shade of a larger tree.)

(*iii*)

Yudhishtir : In the meanwhile let us bear our misfortune as

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best we can. Bring something for the entertainment of our guest. Has Arjun returned with roots and herbs ? (Arjun comes)

Bhim : Lo, here he is. (Arjun bows to Krishna)

Krishna : (Embracing Arjun) How it breaks my heart to see the wretched state of our Gandivadhari. Are you the very Arjun who won Dropadi ?

Dropadi : Yes, the same, my Lord, but now the victim of a dire misfortune.

Yudhishtir : And I am the despicable cause of this whole misfortune.

Arjun : Dear brother, do not reproach yourself again and again. Let us put on a bold face despite our misery ; it is only by this way that we shall be able to outlive the years of our exile. Now as Dwarkapati is with us, he will tell us many heartening things to help us get over our grief.

Krishna : I am always at your disposal. Where are Nakul and Sahdev ?

Dropadi : They have gone out to wash clothing at the bank of yonder book. Lo, they are coming. (Both of them bow and Krishna caresses them)

Krishna : Young friends, do not be downcast. Although your trouble is such as would stagger ordinary men, still you must bear up. Misfortunes come to discipline the brave and make firm their character.

Yudhishtir : Dropadi, now prepare the viands and let us first

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offer some hospitality to our illustrious guest.

Krishna : You need be in no hurry about it. We shall all sit together and eat of the bounties of this woodland. In the meanwhile let us hear more about your story.

(8)

Having seen Kunti, the Pandava's mother, living as she did in the house of Vidur, a pious and God-fearing minister of the Kaurava's Durbar, Krishna returned to Dwarka along with his sister, Subhadra, and her son, Abhimanyu. She had been married to Arjun and in the interest of her son had not gone into exile with her husband. Nevertheless, she had been feeling sorely distressed, and it was with a half-heart that she set out with her brother, hoping that he would help her in overcoming her grief and in securing the right upbringing of her son under his personal care.

Krishna tried his best to mitigate his sister's trouble and spared no pains in giving the best of training to her son. The result was that within the space of thirteen years, Abhimanyu grew to be as efficient a warrior as his father. He was, in fact, a perfect combination of all the good qualities of Arjun and Krishna. Subhadra was rightly proud of such a son.

(9)

Once Shishupal had invaded Dwarka and set fire to it. Krishna was away at that time. Saliya, the king of Madra. a territory between the upper courses of the Ravi and Chenab, had also tried to do what damage he could to it. Krishna now found the chance of repairing all such damages. New edifices

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were put up. New roads and markets were opened. Trade was given a great impetus. New industries and handicrafts were introduced. Sanitation was improved. Means of protection were increased. The people began to enjoy perfect peace and security.

Yet, with all these reforms engaging the attention of Krishna, he never failed to make a prompt response to the calls for help coming from outside. He had to go to succour the weak and the humble against their persecutors. To this his life was pledged.

One day a messanger came to Dwarka bearing an invitation for Krishna, Subhadra and Abhimanyu. It was a letter from the Pandavas living in the capital of Virat. Therein it was stated that Abhimanyu's marriage with Uttra, the Virat princess, was to be celebrated. This was a surprising news indeed, and at the same time very welcome tidings. Krishna lost no time in reaching Virat with his sister and her son.

(10)

The five Pandava brothers and Dropadi wandered in the Kamyakvan for twelve years and in the thirteenth, disguised as Gandharvas, they took service with the Viratpati They had need for this disguise, because in the event of being discovered they would have had to go in exile for another fourteen years, such were the terms of their banishment.

It may not be void of interest to state that Yudhishtir took the name of Kank rishi as the Guru of the four remaining brothers. Arjun called himself Brihannala and took up the duty of teaching music and dancing to Uttra, the Virat

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princess. Bhim, as Valhab, assumed the role of head cook in the royal kitchen. Nakul, now named Granthak, became the keeper of the king's horses. Sahidev, called Tantripal, assumed the charge of the cows. Dropadi became the personal attendant of the princess, under the name of Sarindhari.

All six lived incognito for a full year and then one day their identity was revealed, when Bhim and Arjun had to show their bravery in rescuing the royal cows from the hands of the Kaurava marauders. The Viratpati apologised for any indignity that might have been offered to the Pandavas in their disguise. He also offered the hand of Uttra to Arjun, but he consented to accept her rather as his daughter-in-law. It was for this reason that Abhimanyu had been sent for alongt with Krishna and Subhadra.

(11)

The marriage of Uttra with Abhimanyu was celebrated with kingly pomp and show. Many guests from far and near had been invited. Kings, sages, ministers, holy men, and priests of high order attended the function.

After the nuptial celebrations were over, the guests held a council to devise measures for the restoration of Indarprast to the Pandavas. According to their resolution, Dhrishadyumna, the brother of Dropadi, sent his priest, a sweet-tempered diplomat, to Hastinapur, in order that he might try to persuade Duryodhan to give the Pandava's territories back to them, as the term of their exile was over. He brought back the reply that the restoration of the territories had not been a condition of the banishment order.

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Dhritrashtir, the father of Duryodhan, thinking that the Pandavas were contemplating war in the event of no settlement being made, sent a messenger to adyise them against resorting to such a course. To him Yudhishtir replied that he wanted peace and not strife. He further added that he and his brothers would be satisfied with the gift of even five villages.

This was the most minimum demand imaginable, still Duryodhan was too obstinate to concede it. His mother, Gandhari, who was a very good lady, expostulated with him much, but he did not listen to her. Dhritrashtir, too, advised him. Bhisham, the grandfather, also tried his best to bring him on the right path. Vidur also warned him that his persistent folly and insatiable greed would lead him to destruction. But Duryodhan was adamant.

(12)

Krishna was a most ardent lover of peace and the last person to resort to war. We have seen how deeply he abhorred bloodshed. It was because of this that he had left Mathura for good. It was because of this that he had devised the simplest and easiest way of compassing the death of Jarasandha. Krishna had no thirst for vengeance. When Shishupal had invaded Dwarka and set fire to the town during his absence, he never thought of retaliation. No, doubt he had to fight many fights during his life-time, but it was not for the sake of conquest. It was simply to release the weak from the tyranny of the strong. He waged war against the king of Puri to liberate the hundred maidens from the sinful bondage in which they were held. He killed the tyrant rulers and seated their sons upon the vacant thrones, thereby making the new

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sovereigns his friends.

Krishna, as is quite clear from the above, was out and out an apostle of peace, but he could not tolerate injustice and wicked usurpation. He must extirpate the cruel and unrighteous, If it could not be done by peaceful ways he must take to war.

(13)

From the obstinate attitude of Duryodhan and his partisans it was quite evident that he would listen to no sane counsel. Still Krishna, hoping against hope, determined to make a personal effort to straighten out the Kaurava-Pandava tangle. He knew that Duryodhan regarded him as the supporter of the Pandavas and therefore it was dangerous for him to go to Hastinapur, but he set aside all such fears. He thought that he must earnestly strive for peace, and if his embassy failed there would be every justification for him to urge the Pandavas to claim their right by war. It will then be a righteous war, a Dharm Yudh.

(14)

Krishna's arrival at Hastinapur was made known to the Kauravas. He was received with great respect. Duryodhan offered to entertain him, but he would dine only at Vidur's.

The Durbar was held. It was attended by Bhisham, Drona, Kripa, Karn, Jayadratha, Shakuni, Vidur, and several other men known for their high wisdom, piety, and statesmanship. Krishna stood up and in an eloquent speech began to plead the cause of justice and fairplay.

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He clearly pointed out that war among relatives would result in bringing their glory to the dust, while peacefully united they would remain as the strongest power in the country.

He emphasised the fact that there would be immense bloodshed and that the destruction of brave men in the battle-fields would pave the way for foreign invasion and the ultimate enslavement of the Bharatbhumi.

Then, from the general, the speaker came to the particular side of the situation and remarked that it was sheer injustice on the Kaurava's part to keep their cousins, the legitimate heirs of the kingdom, so long deprived of their possessions. He warned the doers of such injustice against the bitter fruit that it would bring to them in the long run.

He then referred to the troubles the Pandavas had been suffering at the Kaurava's hands. He dwelt upon the insult done to Dropadi. He brought to their notice the trick that had been played to deprive Yudhishtir of his sovereignty. In the end he made a strong appeal to the sense of justice shared by all in the audience and prayed to them to arbitrate on behalf of righteousness.

(15)

Duryodhan heard Krishna's speech and was filled with wrath which was further inflamed by his wicked partisans. The wise men in the hall tried to make him see things in their true perspective, but it was useless. At last he openly said " I will not give the Pandavas even as much of land as can cover the eye of a needle. "

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Krishna left the Durbar, disappointed. Duryodhan tried to imprison him but failed. Now the only course open to the Pandavas was that of war. Dwarkapati must espouse their cause, irrespective of consequences. To him no sacrifice seemed too great to be offered at the altar of Dharma and Righteousness.

Krishna was as full of patience and self-composure as he was the store of inexhaustible energy. He was the enemy of despair and depression. He tried his best to tackle knotty a situation, but if he failed he never felt dejected. His heart was always singing with cheer.

It was in such a mood that Krishna was returning from Hastinapur. He came to the bank of the Jamuna, the river so dear to him during his boyhood. Being an ardent lover of all that is beautiful in Nature, he tarried there, took his bath, and offered prayer. Then, after eating some fruit, he lay down for rest.

The sun was fiercely hot, but under the tree where Krishna was reclining, it was cool and refreshing Lying in this posture he went into a yogic trance in which he s w all the future events that were to take place on the battle-field. The doom of the Kauravas and the final triumph of the Pandavas stood out vividly before his mind's eye. Cheered up by the visions of such happy results of the coming war he opened his physical eyes and applied the flute to his lips.

From this simple organ of bamboo wood there issued such sweet notes as thrilled the very heart of Nature. The music, the player, and the visible and invisible listeners, all

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were fused into one whole of harmoniuos bliss.

(17)

Krishna soon returned to the Pandava camp. A brother of Duryodhan had already arrived there, long before him. This Kaurava messenger by his taunting and abusive talk had worsened the situation, so much so that nothing but fighting seemed to offer the only s.lution of the problem.

Preparations were soon set rfoot. In a few days the armies of both the parties were marching towards the battle-field of Kurukshater, There were horses, chariots, elephants, and a host of foot-soldiers armed with clubs, discs. javelins, swords, spears, bows and arrows and numerous other weapans.

Horns and conches were blown, horses neighed and elephants trumpeted, amid the shouts of hundreds of warriors. Indeed, there was a horrible din which rent thy atnosphere for miles around.

Bhisham was the Kaurava's General and Dhrishadyumna acted as Commander of the Pandava forces. Arjun, seated in a chariot driven by Krishna as its charioter, came into the battle-field.

(18)

When both the armies stood arrayed for fight, Arjun saw his relatives, elders, and Gurus embattled against him. All of a sudden he was overpowered by an emotion of attachment and cried out saying," What, am I such a despicable wretch as to raise my weapon againt these people to whom my love and

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worship are due ? I would rather beg my food in this world than gain sovereignty by wading through the blood of my kinsfolk and of other people."

Having said these words, Arjun fell back on his seat in the chariot and Gandiva, the bow, dropped from his hands. Krishna, now the charioter of Arjun, was filled with deep concern and wondered in his mind if the whole work would be so easily spoiled. However he proved equal to the emergency and set Arjun's mind at rest by his valuable instructions known as the Gita.

(19)

This Gita is a large work, elaborated into its present form by Rishi Vyas. There was no time for Krishna to say so many things and in such a detailed manner as they have been given in this book. What he briefly said to Arjun at that time we may try to reproduce here in the form of a short dialogue, supposed to have been held between the persons concerned.

Arjun : Shame upon me if I get the throne of Hastinapur by spilling the blood of all these people so dear to me. No, I will not fight. Please take me out of the battle-field.

Krishna : Arjun, wait a bit. If you run away like this the people will call you a coward. Would you like to bear this insult ?

Arjun : Let them say what they will. At least I will not have lifted up my bow against my kinsfolk. Let the Kauravas come and slay me. Death at their

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hands is welcome to me, but I must not kill them.

Krishna : Who are you to kill them ? Nobody can kill anybody. You can kill the flesh, which has to be destroyed, some day. But you can never kill the soul that is the real entity in man. When one corporeal frame is destroyed, the indwelling soul at once takes up another. Where is the loss ? You are quite mistaken to think that you would be killing your kinsfolk or others,

Arjun : Then what should I do ?

Krishna : You must fight. That is your duty. That is the duty of a kshatriys like you.

Arjun : No, this I can never do. I feel so much depressed that I can not do any work.

Krishna : It is quite wrong. In whatever state a man may be he can not cease to work. Work is his life-breath. Even a person lying on a sick-bed does some work, though it may be entirely mental. It is not man that works, but God has put something in his nature which goads him to work in spite of himself.

Arjun : Supposing I fight and lose. Will it not be shameful ?

Krishna : You should never think of the consequence. You are concerned only with the performance of your duty, however bitter it may seem. Leave the question of result in the hands of the Lord.

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Arjun : Even if I win or lose, my sorrow will always remain for having killed many of my kins-folk in the battle-field.

Krishna : Look here, you are again thinking about the end of your actions. I say forget this. You are only to fight. It is the "Nishkam," the desireless performance of duty towards God, ourselves, other people and creatures, that will free us from the bonds of sorrow and death. Our work should be a dedication to the Lord and no selfish consideration should enter our minds while we are doing it. This is the only way to liberation.

Arjun : I find myself in a quandary. As yet I don't see my way clearly.

Krishna : Think of it like this : You are fighting for righteousness. The evil-minded Duryodhan and his party are its enemies. It is a fight for Dharma. Will you be on the side of Dharma or your perfidious kinsfolk.

Arjun : I shall take the side of Dharma.

Krishna : That's what I say. Then fight.
(Arjun lifts up the bow and starts fighting.)

(20)

Krishna did not take any active part in the fight yet his was a most dangerous task. He was ready to do it for his love of Arjun and of Righteousness. Though playing the role of a charioter he was the main spring of the whole war-machinery on Pandava's side.

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Whenever Arjun felt depressed, Krishna buoyed him up to the proper pitch of courage to do his duty. It was by acting according to his directions that the former fought and won victory after victory. The war lasted for eighteen days, during which time Bhisham, Drona, Karn, Shalya, Jayadratha, and Duryodnan, all were killed one after the other. All the Kaurava leaders lay dead on the battle-field, but the five Panadava brothers remained alive.

However, there was one tragic case on Arjun's side. It was the death of his son, Abhimanyu, who was killed by unfair means by the Kauravas. They had used many tricks and frauds against the Pandavas. Needless to say that during the fight they were paid back in their own coin. Krishna consoled Uttra and Subhadra who felt deeply stricken with grief over Abhimanyu's death. He checked the former from performing sati, since she was expectant and the child she was going to bring forth was destined to become a "Chakravarti" sovereign.

When the fight was over Yudhishtir felt inclined to become an ascetic. Krishna checked him from doing so and exhorted him to assume the sovereignty of Hastinapur. He was persuaded to celebrate the Asvamedh yagna, as a symbol of the establishment of Dharm Raj, for which Yudhishtir stood and which was also the mission of Krishna himself.

(21)

Krishna at last was free and he returned to Dwarka. Dharm Raj like Ram Raj had been set up. The tyrant rulers had been crushed. The country and its people were liberated from all sorts of bondages. Our hero's mission was over.

Krishna gave his time to meditation and spiritual pursuits. Driving in his chariot he used to visit sylvan retreats where

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he passed his time in divine contemplation. One day when he was lying under a tree in a meditative posture, characterised by placing the right leg across the left knee put in an upright state, an archer named Jara saw him from a distance, and mistaking him for a deer, discharged an arrow hitting Krishna with fatal results.

The hunter rushed to the spot with the expectation of picking up the game that he had shot. But coming near whom did he find but Dwarkapati himself wounded by the shaft? Jara's grief and fears were beyond words. With tears in his eyes he fell prostrate at the feet of Krishna begging for pardon. The lordly Yogi, although in the grip of excruciating pain, smilingly forgave the other, saying, "It is no fault of thine. It had to be this way."

(22)

Daruk, the charioter, who was roaming the forest in search of his master, reached the place where Krishna was lying bleeding to death. He was shocked to see the agony of his Lord. As he stood dumb with grief, Krishna said to him, "My friend, do not be sorry for me. It has all happened as God ordained. Please go to Dwarka and report that I am on the eve of departure. Ask the people to leave the colony at once for the sea will swallow it very soon. Send for Arjun from Hastinapur to take my relatives from here. As for yourself, Daruk, spend your remaining life in meditation and prayer. This is the only way to happiness."

Having said these words Krishna yielded up his spirit.

(23)

Such was Krishna, a man among men. He was a god, indeed, but his divinity was his humanity.

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ERRATA

Page No.	*Paragraph*	*Line*	*Incorrect*	*Correct*
10	Last	6	Some times	Sometimes
18	2	4	blosso-m	blossom-
24	—	2	subsituted	substituted
27	—	10	gaint	giant
,,	—	11	snaching	snatching
28	2	7	gaint	giant
,,	3	—	As...child.	"As...child".
29	2	1	felt	now felt
33	2	4	Both brother	Both brothers
34	3	5	audience	spectators
36	2	10	unner	under
37	1	4	monsoon	monsoons
39	2	4	the General	the General of
56	2	3, 4	knotty a situation	every knotty situation
57	2	1	rfoot	afoot

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An Important Notice

IN these days we are celebrating the birth anniversary of Shri Krishna. This the Indian people have been doing for the last fifty centuries with unflagging zeal and unstinted devotion. It is indeed the commemoration of such events that has kept our nation alive in the face of dreadful upheavels of fortune that we are called upon to suffer from time to time.

This year we are challenged to hold this *Janam Ashtmi* festival with unprecedented enthusiasm because we urgently feel the necessity of walking in the footsteps of this saint-soldier of Gokul-cum-Dawarka, in order to protect our land from the ruthless ambition of the Chinese totalitarianism seeking to spread all over the globe. by insidiously using Bharat as its nearest springboard for the conquest of S.E. Asia.

Kirtans, vigils, musical concerts, lectures and radio programmes will be in evidence to hold this country-wide celebration. I think the worthy reader will agree with me that all these items will be of fugitive nature, not lasting more than a day. Hence something handy and of worthwhile duration is needed, and as such to which a lover of Shri Krishna can take from day to day for the study of this eternal hero of ours. To meet this pressing need equally felt by the young and old, male and female. this lovely brochure, portraying in simple and idiomatic English the life story of Lord Krishna, is being presented at a very cheap price It is not too much to hope and expect that the well-to-do devotees of this hero of heroes will purchase copies of this booklet for free distribution among young students of both sexes as well as among other readers.

It may not be out of place to state here that the humble author is all-out to produce patriotic literature in these days, as evident from his publications infusing *vir ras* into the people of Bharat who, consequently, feel united as one man to hurl back the Chinese Reds Encouraged by the warm reception which is expected to be accorded to this brochure, the book, titled the Heroines of our History, will shortly see the light of day, in a serial form. Also the attractive biographies of our national workers of the past and present will follow suit in quick succession. When this is done, the author's fondest dream of seeing a solidly united Bharat against all present and future emergencies shall soon be realised. Soliciting the willing cooperation of the worthy readers in this literary service.

I am a lowly,

10th August, 1963. M. L. PEACE

Author of over a dozen publications.

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